

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EUR-25 AID-20 OMB-01 EA-11 DRC-01 /152 W

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R 070856Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0921

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 10686

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, EA, ID, US, ET

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. OF INCREASING RADICALIZATION
OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION

1. THE PERIOD SINCE MICHAEL IMRU BECAME PRIME MINISTER ON JULY 22 HAS BEEN MARKED BY A TREND TWOARDS MORE RADICAL POLICIES. SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF THIS RADICALIZATION HAVE BEEN THE FOLLOW-
ING:

THE ISOLATION OF THE EMPEROR BY THE ARREST OF ALMOST ALL OFFICIALS PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO HIM; THE ELIMINATION OR MILITARIZATION OF VARIOUS IMPERIAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE MINISTRY OF THE PALACE, THE IMPERIAL CHILLOT, THE SPECIAL BRANCH OF THE EMPEROR'S PRIVATE CABINET, AND THE CROWN COUNCIL; ARTICLES IN THE PRESS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE STREETS AIMED AT THE EMPEROR HAMSELF; INCREASING TALK OF ABOLISHING THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTION AND ESTABLISHING A REPUBLIC; THE NATIONALIZATION OF SEVERAL PARA-STATAL ENTERPRISES; A SEMI-MARXIST COLORATION IN PROPAGANDA EMANATING FROM THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE ARMED FORCES; AN INCREASINGLY SYCOPHANTIC ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE MEDIA TOWARDS THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND THE MILITARY FORCES IN GENERAL; AN INCREASING TENDENCY OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO ISSUE PUBLIC ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS IN COMPLETE DISREGARD OF THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT; AN INCREASING TENDENCY

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FOR GROWING NUMBERS OF EDUCATED ETHIOPIANS EVEN IN CONVERSATIONS

WITH AMERICANS TO SPEAK WELL OF SOVIET OR MAOIST DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGIES; AND VARIOUS INDICATIONS THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ARE ADVOCATING THAT ETHIOPIA TURN TO THE SOVIET UNION OR CHINA AS ITS PRINCIPAL PROTECTOR AND SUPPLIER OF ARMS.

2. WE BELIEVE A FUNDAMENTAL REASON FOR THIS TREND TOWARDS RADICALISM HAS BEEN THE INABILITY OF THE MODERATE REFORMISTS TO PRODUCE RAPID AND HIGHLY POPULAR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES. HAD THEY BEEN ABLE TO DO SO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH HARDER FOR MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS TO GAIN IN STRENGTH. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, FOR A GROUP OF MODERATE REBELS IN ANY NEW REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION TO PRODUCE RAPID CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS WHICH SATISFY PUBLIC OPINION. THE BREAKDOWN OF PREVIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND CUSTOMS COMBINED WITH THE INEXPERIENCE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES OF THE NEW LEADERS MAKES THIS A TRULY FORMIDABLE TASK IN ANY EVENT. THIS TASK HAS BEEN EVEN MORE DIFFICULT IN ETHIOPIA IN RECENT WEEKS BECAUSE THE PARALLEL EXISTENCE OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY "GOVERNMENTS" HAS TENDED TO PARALYZE THE FORMER. AS YET WE SEE NO LIKELIHOOD THAT THE MODERATE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT HEADED BY MICHAEL IMRU WILL BE ABLE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS TO IMPLEMENT A HIGHLY POPULAR CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT APPEARS PROBABLE THAT FURTHER RADICALIZATION WILL DEVELOP IN ADDIS ABABA DURING THIS PERIOD, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE HOW FAR RURAL OPINION WILL BE PREPARED TO FOLLOW. ADDITIONAL INFLUENCE MAY THEREFORE BE GAINED BY RADICAL REFORMISTS WHO ARE NOT NEARLY AS WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES AS THEIR MORE MODERATE COLLEAGUES.

3. IN VIEW OF SUCH PROSPECTS IT IS ESSENTIAL TO CONSIDER WHETHER A CHANGE IN U.S. ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR ETHIOPIA IS DESIRABLE. WE BELIEVE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT NO DIMINUTION OF U.S. ASSISTANCE WITH REGARD TO DROUGHT RELIEF AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DESERVES SERIOUS CONSIDERATION UNLESS AND UNTIL IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT WE ARE NO LONGER DEALING WITH A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT. WITH REGARD TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT FEW DEVELOPMENTS WOULD DO MORE TO WEAKEN THE STILL DOMINANT MODERATE COMPONENT OF ETHIOPIA'S CURRENT LEADERSHIP AND STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THOSE RADICALS WHO FAVOR REORIENTATION OF ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN POLICY THAN WOULD A CUTTING BACK OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE AT
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PRESENT. EVEN THOUGH THERE IS SOME RISK THAT THE NEW LEADERSHIP WHICH MAY GAIN ASCENDANCY IN THIS COUNTRY MIGHT AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE CHOOSE TO ALTER THE TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., WE THEREFORE CONSIDER IT PRESENTLY MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER NOT TO SLACKEN IN OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, EXTREMISTS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ADDIS10686
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740249-0420
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740966/aaaacdvd.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 AUG 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. OF INCREASING RADICALIZATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, ET, ID, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005